

Session 1 – Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, Lost Son

Youth Sunday School on July 3rd

- Beforehand – Read the three parables in Luke 15 - Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, Lost Son
- *Optional: Display three groups of pennies (or other small objects—small candies, for example) side by side on a table where all will be able to see: one group of 100, a second of 10, and a pair.*

As group gathers -

Optional: Invite participants to look at the three piles of pennies you prepared. Ask them to close their eyes for a moment. Remove one penny from each pile. Ask participants to open their eyes and tell you how the piles are now different.

Tell participants that in today's session they will read and reflect on three of Jesus's parables that involve counting and noticing what, and who, is missing.

Opening prayer:

God of all wisdom, you are at work in our world and in our hearts to bring forth a new world and to give us new hearts, in which your will is done on earth as it is in heaven. By your Spirit, teach us in this time together, that we may learn and do all that is needed to receive your rule of grace, for we ask in the name of our Teacher and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Ask - "What is a parable?"

Invite one or more participants to look up and read aloud the definitions of parable in a standard English dictionary (or from a trusted dictionary website).

Ask - "What about these definitions of parable seems familiar or unfamiliar to you, and why?"

Say -

- Parables compare two unlike things by putting them side by side in an unexpected way.
- Parables can vary in length from a few sentences to a longer story.
- Parables carry at least two levels of meaning: the literal and the metaphorical.
- Parables may be but are not always allegorical—that is, the elements in a parable do not necessarily represent one and only one other thing or truth.
- Parables do not have a single meaning.
- Jesus did not invent the parable.
- Parables can be interpreted in many ways, but modern readers should always assume a parable's original audience would have been able to find meaning in it; therefore, modern readers must consider the historical and social setting in which a parable originated (in the case of Jesus's parables, first-century Galilee and Judea).

As a group read the three parables in Luke 15 - Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, Lost Son and then watch session 1 – it is 11 minutes long.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

15 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. **2** But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

3 Then Jesus told them this parable: **4** "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? **5** And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders **6** and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' **7** I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."

The Parable of the Lost Coin

8 "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins^ᾰ and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? **9** And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' **10** In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

The Parable of the Lost Son

11 Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. **12** The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them."

13 "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. **14** After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. **15** So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. **16** He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything."

17 "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! **18** I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. **19** I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' **20** So he got up and went to his father."

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

²⁸ "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

³¹ "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

After watching video read aloud this quotation from Short Stories by Jesus:

Say: We need to take count not only of our blessings, but also of those in our families, and in our communities. And once we count, we need to act. Finding the lost, whether they are sheep, coins, or people, takes work. It also requires our efforts, and from those efforts there is the potential for wholeness and joy.

Ask:

- What more could our congregation be doing to connect with and serve those both within and without our own community of faith who appear “missing” or “lost”?

CLOSING PRAYER

You know us all, Lord Jesus, and you know those whom we do not. Forgive us when we lose those who are precious to you, by what we do or by what we fail to do. Send us in your Spirit’s power to them, that we may rejoice together as children of your Father in heaven, and ours. Amen.